

March 4, 2011

Appropriations Committee Public Hearing Testimony
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Brain Injury Association of Connecticut (BIAC)

Good Evening Chairpersons and Distinguished Members of the Appropriations Committee.

I provide you this testimony as the daughter of a brain injury survivor, the Director of Brain Injury Services at the Brain Injury Association of Connecticut (BIAC), and a member of the Connecticut Concussion Task Force. Most importantly, however, I am one voice representing thousands of Connecticut residents who seek assistance from us.

Those with brain injuries, Veterans, family members, caregivers, parents of children who sustain concussions, nurses, doctors, community providers, discharge planners, social workers, case managers, state agency personnel including, but not limited to DCF, DDS, DMHAS, DOC, DDS, and even you, members of the Connecticut legislature – contact BIAC. Every single person that contacts BIAC does so for a singular purpose - to get the resources needed to assist someone with a brain injury. We are the ONLY organization on all things related to brain injury in the state of Connecticut.

Let me point out the irony of the situation we find ourselves in. For over 25 years, BIAC has been the only organization in Connecticut that provides information, resources and support for individuals with brain injuries, their families, caregivers and the professionals who serve them. This is exactly why DSS contracts with BIAC to provide these critical services that DSS is not positioned to do. We operate a toll free Helpline which has experienced a 600% increase in calls in just the last three years. 600%! Why would the Governor and legislature take away funding to the organization that provides the services that DSS cannot? I spent four hours at the LOB on Tuesday and listened to the DSS Commissioner and others testify about the delay of services being provided to CT residents in need due to ever increasing caseloads of DSS workers, and the lack of staff to provide these necessary services. And yet, the Governor is proposing to take away BIAC's

modest \$126,342 grant that allows us to fill the void that DSS is not able to manage. This lacks financial, logistical and most importantly - common sense.

Another irony should be noted. This very legislature in May of this year crafted and passed critical legislation to assist in making proper diagnosis and management of recreational and sports-related concussions more likely. Yet, now the Governor is recommending eliminating the funds to the very organization that these concussed athletes, parents and providers turn to – the Brain Injury Association of Connecticut.

In closing, let me gently remind you that as medicine advances, more people survive their brain injuries – and as more people survive their brain injuries, more people need help. In fact, this evening, as many as ten or more Connecticut residents will have sustained a traumatic brain injury. A brain injury could happen to any of us here... while walking to our cars, on the drive home, climbing the stairs to our front door... or taking that long awaited hot shower. Young or old, rich or poor, male or female, each of us is at risk - every single day.

Thankfully, when someone affected by brain injury has needed help, BIAC has always been there. To ensure that BIAC is, please remove our very modest operating grant funding from the list of proposed budget cuts under the DSS line item for Services for Persons with Disabilities.

Thank you.